

Exposure to Mobbing: Perceptions of Primary School Teachers

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Abstract

The general purpose of the present research is to examine teachers' perceptions of being exposed to Mobbing. The population of the research, in which the screening model is used, consists of teachers working in private and public elementary schools during the 2015-2016 school year. The study group is formed with 305 teachers who were voluntarily participating in the research and working in private and public primary schools in different provinces and districts of Turkey. 168 (55%) of the participants were female and 137 (45%) were male teachers. Emotional Harassment Scale developed by Ocak (2008) was used as data collection tool in the research. The data was collected online via e-mail. According to the findings of the research, elementary school teachers are exposed to Mobbing at a moderate level. In addition, women in terms of gender, married in terms of marital status, and teachers working in private schools as the type of institution, perceived themselves as more exposed to Mobbing than others. Depending on these results, suggestions regarding research and application were presented.

Keywords: mobbing, primary school teachers, gender, private and public schools, marital status

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INTRODUCTION

Mobbing (psychological violence), one of the most important causes of organizational inefficiency, is an important phenomenon that exists in the world and in Turkey both in public and private institutions and organizations but there is not yet a specific consensus on its identification and definition. Mobbing is an emotional attack systematically manifested in forms such as psychological violence, oppression, siege, harassment, humiliation, threat etc. by using abuse of power or position. It begins with the person being a target of disrespectful and harmful behavior; the employer forces him/her to quit the job by creating an aggressive environment that includes discrediting through hinting and ridiculing (GÜ, 2016). In the Mobbing process, the source of behaviors focuses not on an event but on a person or persons. In order for a behavior to be defined as Mobbing, it has to be done intentionally, repeated systematically and must have been going on for a long time (Çobanoğlu, 2005).

Individuals spend most of their daily lives in their workplaces. They share this environment with the employees there, they affect one another positively or negatively or they are also influenced positively or negatively. Mobbing, psychological violence in Turkish, which superiors apply to subordinates in business life have negative effects on employees. In this case, those who are exposed to psychological abuse have no choice but to leave the work. The probability of seeing Mobbing, psychological violence, in institutions that prioritise the mind and act reasonably is less than other institutions. Because the purpose here is the common interests of the institution that is being worked for. Therefore, people give it particular importance before anything else.

According to Tınaz (2006) and Tetik (2010) some managerial and organizational practices that cause Mobbing are; excessive hierarchical structure, lack of organizational discipline, inadequate expenditure on human resources, insufficient intra-organizational communication channels, lack of conflict management and problem-solving skills, poor leadership, lack of team work, ignoring the differences in education and competence, poor management, closed policy practices, stress intensity, monotony, managers denying or not believing in the presence of Mobbing, immoral practices, a tendency to find a scapegoat, incorrect selection and recruitment of staff.

Educational organizations are intrinsically more likely to be exposed to emotional harassment than other sectors, organizations or institutions due to the intensive labor, the continuity of upper and lower relationships, and limited opportunities for promotion. Salin (2008) points out that in education, Mobbing is not only caused by the pressure of people on each other or by inter-personal relations, but also by the structure of the educational organization. Demirel (2008) concludes that the reason for this is that the qualifications in the education sector and the production output are not sufficiently clear. Researches on Mobbing in the field of education (Ayhan and Şahbudak, 2012, Böltükbaşı, 2015, Cemaloğlu and Ertürk, 2007, Ceylan, 2005, Ehi, 2011, Esemen, 2015, İzmir and Fazlıoğlu, 2011, Karakoç, Özgen, 2009) confirm the existence of Mobbing behaviors arising from both interpersonal relations and organizational structure, and reveal that personal and institutional

problems are experienced.

Researches on Mobbing in the field of education indicates both the institutionalization of schools and the increase in workforce, in other words, the performance to be achieved through the harmony of teachers and administrators. The reduction of conflicts between teachers and administrators, the improvement of managerial and communication behaviors, the increase of performance and satisfaction levels of teachers and administrators, the organization's acquisition of a dynamic structure which constantly renews and develops itself are achieved via the researches to be made on this subject and field.

Consequently, in this study, primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing and whether there is a relationship between their perceptions and some variables that might affect these perceptions are considered as the basic problem. Accordingly, the answers to the following sub-problems are sought:

1. How are primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing?
2. Do primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing differ by school type?
3. Do primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing differ by gender?
4. Do primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing differ by marital status?

METHOD

This study is aimed at identifying the mobbing (psychological violence) perceptions of teachers in private and public primary schools. For this reason, the study was conducted based on the "screening model". The screening model is a research approach that describes the past or present situation as it exists, and it aims to define and describe the current situation (Karasar, 2008). In screening models, the describing function of the science, namely observation, recording and identification of the relationship between the events are at the forefront (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2000). Therefore, in this study, teachers' Mobbing perceptions have been tried to be portrayed as they are without being manipulated.

Population and Sample of the study

The population of the study is composed of the teachers working in the primary schools in Turkey in the academic year of 2015-2016. Since the data are collected online via e-mail, the study group constitutes a total of 305 teachers who work in private and public primary schools in different provinces and districts of Turkey and voluntarily participate in the research. 168 (55%) of the participants were female and 137 (45%) were male; 206 (67.5%) work at private schools and 99 (32.5%) work at public schools.

Data Collection Tool and Collection of Data

Emotional Harassment Scale developed by Ocak (2008) was used as data collection tool in the research. The validity-reliability study of the scale was conducted with 593 students. According to the results of the factor analysis, the data collection tool consists of seven sub-dimensions. These are behaviours affecting the quality of life and professional reputation (10,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,37), behaviors that prevent social relationships (21, 22, 24, 24, 26, 27, 28), behaviors damaging personal reputation(11, 20, 23, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36), behaviors that prevent the person from distinguishing himself (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9), violent behaviors towards the person (29, 38, 39), behaviors that prevent the person from communicating (6, 7, 8), and behaviors interfering in the person's private life (33, 35). While the Cronbach Alpha Reliability calculated for the seven dimensions of the measurement tool ranged from 0.70 to 0.91, the test retest reliability ranged from 0.70 to 0.97. As a result, the measuring instrument is of the five-point Likert type. Participants respond to each behavior in terms of (1) None, (2) Low, (3) Medium, (4) Highly and (5) Completely. Expressions in the scale are evaluated as the highest score of 5 and the lowest score of 1. The range of scores used is; none(1.00 - 1.79), low (1.80 - 2.59), medium (2.60 - 3.39), highly (3.40 - 4.19) and completely (4.20 - 5.00).

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In the analysis of data collected online via e-mail, the SPSS 22.0 package program was used and the arithmetic mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (ss) scores were calculated to determine the teachers' exposure levels to Mobbing. Independent t-test was used to compare the differences in teachers' perception levels of exposure to Mobbing according to their institution type and gender, and One-way analysis of variance was used to test for differences in their marital status. The significance of the difference between the averages was interpreted according to the level of significance of 0.05.

FINDINGS

In this section, findings obtained from the results of the statistical analysis regarding the sub-problems of the study are included.

1. Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing

In the study, firstly, primary school teachers' exposure perceptions of Mobbing were examined. The findings

were tabled and interpreted in terms of 7 sub-dimensions of the measurement tool under a single table. Table 1 gives the descriptive statistics of teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing.

Table 1. The Results of Descriptive Statistics of Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing

Sub Dimensions	Behaviours of Exposure to Mobbing	n	\bar{x}	sd
1) Behaviors Affecting Quality of Life and Professional Reputation	I am underestimated in connection with the work I do	305	3,12	1,40
	I am forced to perform tasks under my capacity	305	2,30	1,22
	My key competences for my job are taken away	305	3,09	1,51
	I'm asked to do unreasonable tasks.	305	4,19	0,95
	I am faced with a workload that exceeds my capacity	305	3,64	1,85
	I'm asked to carry out impossible tasks	305	3,52	1,46
	Trivial and unpleasant tasks are given to me	305	3,35	1,31
	My work and efforts are constantly criticized	305	3,13	1,52
	My work is controlled in an exaggerated way	305	3,53	1,64
2) Behaviors that Prevents Social Relationships	Physically challenging tasks are given	305	1,00	0,00
	Total	305	3,09	0,91
	I am met with hostile attitudes when I approach somebody	305	4,02	0,96
	I am being ignored and left out of the events	305	3,29	1,38
	I am prevented from communicating with other employees	305	1,67	0,68
	My colleagues are not talking to me except for work	305	1,39	0,54
	I am ignored by management and other employees	305	2,87	0,87
	My colleagues are acting like I'm not there	305	2,58	1,33
	An isolated work environment from colleagues is being created	305	2,77	1,18
3) Behaviours damaging Personal Reputation	Total	305	2,65	0,43
	It is implied that I should quit my job	305	3,51	1,08
	My mistakes are constantly reminded near others	305	2,69	1,09
	I am exposed to oppressive jokes	305	3,45	1,05
	I am exposed to unfair accusation	305	3,63	1,39
	I am exposed to ridicule	305	2,45	1,30
	The comments containing insults about my personality are made	305	3,16	1,15
	I am called with humiliating names and I am treated disrespectfully	305	3,70	1,51
	Total	305	3,23	0,68
4) Behaviours preventing the person to distinguish himself	Information that will affect my performance at work is hidden from me	305	3,31	1,39
	The people I work with limits my possibilities to distinguish myself	305	3,29	1,20
	I'm being threatened with facial expressions and gestures	305	3,60	1,38
	I'm being threatened verbally	305	3,62	0,80
	I'm scolded loudly	305	2,19	0,88
	My opinions / ideas and suggestions are not taken into account	305	2,99	1,50
	Total	305	3,17	1,00
	Management prevents me from talking to my colleagues	305	3,09	1,37
	Mild violence is applied to intimidate me	305	1,00	0,00
5) Variable of violence against theIndividual	Physical damage is given	305	1,00	0,00
	Total	305	1,69	0,45
	Unfounded rumours are spreaded about me	305	3,14	1,16
6) Behavior that prevents the person to communicate	Rumours containing insults about my private life are spreaded	305	3,10	1,19
	Total	305	3,09	1,36
	Unfounded rumours are spreaded about me	305	3,14	1,16
7) Behaviors that interfere in the private life of the person	Rumours containing insults about my private life are spreaded	305	3,10	1,19
	Total	305	3,12	0,77
MOBBING	OVERALL AVERAGE	305	2,86	0,80
None	(1) 1.00-1.80			
Little	(2) 1.81-2.60			
Medium	(3) 2.61-3.40			
Highly	(4) 3.41-4.20			
Completely	(5) 4.21-5.00			

As can be understood from the examination of Table 1, teachers think that they are exposed to Mobbing at "medium (3)" level in their institutions ($\bar{x} = 2.86$). Among mobbing behaviors, the matters they express most are that "*They're asked to do unreasonable tasks*" ($\bar{x} = 4.19$), "*They're forced to perform tasks under capacity*" ($\bar{x} = 3.64$), "*They're asked to carry out impossible tasks*" ($\bar{x} = 3.52$), "*Their work is controlled in an exaggerated way*" ($\bar{x} = 3.53$), "*They're met with hostile attitudes when they approach somebody*" ($\bar{x} = 4.02$), "*It is implied that they should quit their job*" ($\bar{x} = 3.51$), "*They're exposed to oppressive jokes*" ($\bar{x} = 3.45$) and "*They're exposed to unfair accusations*" ($\bar{x} = 3.63$), "*They're called with humiliating names and They're treated disrespectfully*" ($\bar{x} = 3.70$), "*They're being threatened with facial expressions and gestures*" ($\bar{x} = 3.60$) ya da "*They're being threatened verbally*" ($\bar{x} = 3.62$). It is understood that among the behaviours that the teachers are exposed to, the points of *affecting quality of life and professional reputation, influencing social relations, damaging the personal reputation and interfering in the private life* are more prominent than the dimensions of violence, preventing communication and interfering in private life.

2. Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing by School type

In the study, secondly, primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing were examined in terms of school type. The findings were interpreted in terms of 7 sub-dimensions of the measurement tool under a single table. Table 2 gives the independent t-test results on the comparison of the teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing according to their school type.

Table 2. Independent T-Test Results on Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing According to Their School Type

Mobbing Elements	School Type	n	\bar{X}	ss	t test		
					t	df	p
Behaviors Affecting Quality of Life and Professional Reputation	Private	206	3,68	0,33	46,872	303	0,001
	State	99	1,85	0,30			
Behaviors that Prevent Social Relationships	Private	206	2,82	0,37	12,065	302	0,001
	State	98	2,30	0,29			
Behaviours damaging Personal Reputation	Private	206	3,52	0,52	14,346	303	0,001
	State	99	2,60	0,53			
Preventing the person to distinguish himself	Private	206	3,77	0,58	42,187	303	0,001
	State	99	1,90	0,19			
Violence Against The Individual	Private	206	1,94	0,32	24,692	303	0,001
	State	99	1,18	0,21			
Behavior that prevents the person to communicate	Private	206	3,94	0,68	39,175	303	0,001
	State	99	1,34	0,46			
Behaviors that interfere in the private life of the person	Private	206	2,96	0,80	6,139	303	0,001
	State	99	3,46	0,61			
General Mobbing Behaviors	Private	206	3,23	0,27	43,781	302	0,001
	State	98	2,09	0,18			

As seen in Table 2, institutional difference differentiates teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing ($t = 43.781$, $p < 0.05$). Mobbing perceptions ($\bar{x} = 3.23$) of teachers working in private schools are at the "medium (3)" level, while Mobbing perceptions ($\bar{x} = 2.09$) of teachers working at public schools are at "low (2)" level. Teachers who work in private schools think that they are exposed to more Mobbing than those who work in the public schools in all other dimensions apart from behaviors that interfere in the person's private life. In other words, Private school teachers are exposed to more Mobbing in terms of behaviors that affect the quality of life and professional reputation, violence, communication prevention and private life intervention, affecting social relationships, damaging personal reputation and preventing the person to distinguish himself.

3. Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing by Gender

Thirdly, primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing were examined in terms of gender. The findings were interpreted in terms of 7 sub-dimensions of the measurement tool under a single table. Table 2 gives the independent t-test results on the comparison of the teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing according to their genders.

Table 3. Independent T-Test Results on Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of exposure to Mobbing Behaviors by Gender

Mobbing Elements	Gender	n	\bar{x}	ss	t test		
					t	df	p
Behaviors Affecting Quality of Life and Professional Reputation	Female	168	3,24	,72	3,332	303	0,002*
	Male	137	2,90	1,08			
Behaviors that Prevent Social Relationships	Female	167	2,78	,41	6,220	302	0,001*
	Male	137	2,50	,39			
Behaviours damaging Personal Reputation	Female	168	3,17	,55	1,560	303	0,120
	Male	137	3,30	,81			
Preventing the person to distinguish himself	Female	168	3,21	,89	0,766	303	0,444
	Male	137	3,12	1,12			
Violence Against The Individual	Female	168	1,89	,46	2,979	303	0,003*
	Male	137	1,61	,45			
Behaviors that prevent the person to communicate	Female	168	3,19	1,19	1,274	303	0,204
	Male	137	2,98	1,55			
Behaviors that interfere in the private life of the person	Female	168	3,37	,70	6,662	303	0,001*
	Male	137	2,81	,76			
General Mobbing Behaviors	Female	167	2,96	,49	3,195	302	0,002*
	Male	137	2,74	,67			

In Table 3, it is observed that male and female teachers differ in their exposure to Mobbing ($t = 3,195$, $p < 0,05$). Mobbing perceptions of female ($\bar{x} = 2,96$) and male teachers ($\bar{x} = 2,74$) are at "medium (3)" level, but females are more likely to be exposed to Mobbing than males according to the independent t-test result. However, females state that Mobbing behaviors are more intense in terms of affecting quality of life and professional reputation, violence, intervention of private life and affecting social relations than behaviors of preventing communication, damaging reputation, and preventing the person to distinguish himself.

4. Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Exposure to Mobbing by Their Marital Status

Finally, primary school teachers' perceptions of Mobbing exposure were examined in terms of their marital status. The findings were interpreted in terms of 7 sub-dimensions of the measurement tool under a single table. Table 4 presents the results of one-way analysis of variance on the comparison of the teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing in terms of marital status.

As seen in Table 4, the marital status difference differentiates teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing ($t = 9,824$, $p < 0,05$). While those who are married ($\bar{x} = 3,01$) think that they are exposed to more Mobbing than both singles ($\bar{x} = 2,83$) and divorced people ($\bar{x} = 2,40$); singles($\bar{x} = 2,83$) perceive more Mobbing than those who are divorced ($\bar{x} = 2,40$). Generally, the Mobbing perception is from high to low; listed as married, single and divorced. Mobbing is perceived in all dimensions from behaviors affecting quality of life and professional reputation to violence, preventing communication, interfering in private life, influencing social relationships, damaging personal reputation and preventing the person to distinguish himself. This finding suggests that marital status is an influential factor in the individual's perception of Mobbing and it increases or decreases the Mobbing feelings he/she has experienced.

Table 4. Results of One-Way ANOVA on Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of exposure to Mobbing Behaviors by Their Marital Status

Mobbing Elements	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	ss	F Test			Difference
					F	df	p	
Behaviors Affecting Quality of Life and Professional Reputation	Married	100	3,31	,82	9,653	2:302	0,001	Married-Single
	Single	170	3,03	,93				Married-Divorced
Behaviors that Prevent Social Relationships	Divorced	34	2,36	,79	10,901	2:301	0,001	Single-Divorced
	Married	100	2,74	,47				Married-Divorced
Behaviours damaging Personal Reputation	Single	170	2,65	,39	9,303	2:302	0,001	Married-Divorced
	Divorced	34	2,25	,32				Single-Divorced
Preventing the person to distinguish himself	Married	100	3,46	,69	4,207	2:302	0,016	Married-Single
	Divorced	34	3,21	,36				Married-Divorced
Violence Against The Individual	Married	100	3,21	,93	6,638	2:302	0,002	Married-Divorced
	Single	170	3,20	1,03				Single-Divorced
Behaviors that prevent the person to communicate	Divorced	34	2,51	,93	8,086	2:302	0,001	Married-Single
	Married	100	1,83	,45				Married-Divorced
Behaviors that interfere in the private life of the person	Single	170	1,64	,44	3,32	2:302	0,02	Married-Single
	Divorced	34	1,54	,50				Married-Divorced
General Mobbing Behaviors	Married	100	2,83	,59	9,824	2:301	0,001	Married-Single
	Single	170	2,83	,59				Married-Divorced
	Divorced	34	2,40	,53				Single-Divorced

DISCUSSION

The first basic result of this research conducted in order to determine primary school teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing is that teachers are exposed to Mobbing at medium level. It can be said, however, that teachers are exposed to more Mobbing in terms of behaviors affecting the quality of life and professional reputation, influencing social relationships, damaging personal reputation and preventing the person to distinguish himself than violence, communication prevention and private life intervention. Many researches on Mobbing in education (Ayhan ve Şahbudak, 2012; Bölükbaşı, 2015; Cemaloğlu ve Ertürk, 2007; Ceylan, 2005; Ehi, 2011; Esemen, 2015; Karakoç, 2016; Otrar ve Özen, 2009) emphasize that teachers are exposed to Mobbing at schools. Cemaloğlu and Ertürk (2008) point out that 67% of the Mobbing behaviors that administrators and teachers are exposed to are directed by the superiors. Tutar (2004) indicates that Mobbing behaviors occur when there is not enough team work among the teachers in the school, when the personal decisions are taken and applied, when there are competitive environments instead of helping and solving problems together, and when favoritism and arrogance is dominant in the working environment. As a result, it can be said that the Mobbing behaviors in the primary schools are generally experienced as lowering the professional reputation, disrupting the social relations among colleagues, reducing the quality of life by isolating the individuals and result from lack of institutionalization, competence and communication.

The second basic result of the research is that Institution type variable has differentiated teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing. That is, primary school teachers working in private schools are exposed to more Mobbing than those in public schools. The findings of Esemen (2015) in his study conducted with private and public Anatolian high school teachers support this research findings. In his study, Esemen states that private Anatolian high school teachers are exposed to Mobbing more frequently and are more influenced due to job security and competitiveness. He also emphasizes that teachers are exposed to Mobbing at a level that can not be ignored in the public high schools, but that teachers who do not have future anxiety can easily deal with it. In his research on 1842 administrators and teachers in private and public primary schools in different regions of Turkey, Gökçe (2006) states that Mobbing is occasionally experienced in private and public schools, but school type does not differentiate teachers' exposure to Mobbing. Koç and Urasoglu-Bulut (2009) also reached the conclusion that there is no effect of working in public or private school in Mobbing perception. These results indicate the presence of Mobbing in both private and public schools, while not fully supporting the result of the study that the institution type affects Mobbing perception. In this study, the reason why more Mobbing perception is found in private schools may be that the feeling of security and comfort given by the state can not be felt in private schools, and Mobbing perception increases because of the high level of anxiety.

Another conclusion reached in the study is that the gender variable differentiated teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing. In terms of their gender, women think they are exposed to Mobbing more than men. In the studies conducted on class teachers by Ceylan (2005), on school counselors working in religious secondary school by Özdemir (2015), on school counselors working in the secondary schools by Bölükbaşı (2015) and on school counselors working in some public schools in Istanbul by Otrar ve Özen (2009), it was found that female teachers were exposed to more Mobbing. Moreover, according to the Commission Research Report of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey prepared by İzmir and Fazlioğlu (2011), it has been revealed that women are exposed to more intimidation than men. The reason for this may be that the women are more emotional and more sensitive than men, their Mobbing perception thresholds are lower, and those who apply mobbing behaviors find the women incapable and weak.

The final result of the study is that the marital status variable differentiated teachers' perceptions of exposure to Mobbing. In terms of marital status, while those who are married consider that they are exposed to more Mobbing than both singles and divorced people, singles perceive more Mobbing than divorced people. Generally, the Mobbing perception is from high to low; listed as Married, single and divorced. In the studies conducted by Ayhan ve Şahbudak (2012) on academicians, and by Bölükbaşı (2015), Ehi (2011), Karakoç (2016), Otrar ve Özen (2009) on teachers, it has been found that the marital status is not effective on the perception of exposure to Mobbing. The results obtained from this study that the marital status variable differentiated the Mobbing perception generally differ from the results in the literature. This may be due to the fact that the studies in the literature have not been done in the sample of primary school teachers. Also in this research sample; the fact that those who are divorced and single are more capable of facing the responsibility of life alone, being able to survive and solve problems on their own, and have more free and independent lives than those who are married is considered to result from the fact that they are more sufficient than those who are married in behaviors such as not being oppressed, being vigilant, being strong, self-defense, controlling.

SUGGESTIONS

In the National Education Regulations and the Civil Servants Law No. 657, special regulations on Mobbing at schools should be taken and legal solutions should be produced to prevent Mobbing. Communication channels between teachers and administrators working in primary schools should be kept open all the time. Particular

attention should be paid to appointing school principals according to merit principles especially for Mobbing behaviors stemming from shortcomings in the management skills of administrators and managers. Possible problems that may arise at schools should be determined in advance, and when any problem arises, it should be solved fairly in a short time. In-service trainings should be given to teachers and administrators on 'problem-solving', 'communication skills' and 'conflict management' for probable problems they may encounter. Psychological support should be provided to those who apply Mobbing. Scientific studies on the satisfaction of the workplace should be continuously carried out and measures should be taken in the direction of the findings obtained. In addition, the number of qualitative and quantitative researches that examine the frequency, causes of Mobbing and coping behaviors with Mobbing and that contribute to the existing literature in this field should be increased.

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